

Stonedene Dedication as National Landmark

As if arranging dedication ceremonies August 20, to commemorate the listing of their home, Stonedene, in the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C. as a federal landmark, is not a large enough task, Dr. and Mrs. Donald L. Curry of Suisun Valley will be taking part in the antique circuit five days later at the San Francisco International Antique Show and Sale at the Sheraton Palace Hotel. The show, running for four days, August 25-28 will be a showcase for many of Stonedene's museum quality antiques.

Mrs. Curry shows the antique collection to prospective buyers by appointment and "as many come to view Stonedene as come to buy our antiques", she remarked. "But we don't mind. In fact, in September, the house will be open to the public for Intercommunity Hospital Guild's Antiques Tour."

The upcoming antique show, in the Grand and Gold Ballrooms of the Sheraton Palace Hotel, provides an elegant background for the magnificent pieces the Currys will be displaying and selling.

Kitty Curry's interest in furnishing Stonedene with heirlooms befitting the 25-room 10,500 square foot mansion, has flowered into a full-blown dealership for the Currys. They participate in the antique circuit every three months, for the benefit of the United Voluntary Services, an organization dedicated to providing volunteer hours and funds for veterans hospitals across the nation.

These two major events taking place in the same week in August, are taken in stride by Mrs. Curry. With the energy and enthusiasm of ten people, she manages her time very carefully, devoting herself to daughters, Kitty O'Hara, 6 and twins, Kimberly and Kelly, who soon will celebrate their first birthdays.

She also handles a demanding career as a staff research associate to her husband, who is associate

professor in the department of physiology at the School of Veterinary Medicine at UC Davis.

And her antique avocation turned vocation gives truth to the adage that if you want something accomplished, ask a busy person.

"Don spent many nights in the library researching the necessary data and compiling the statistics for the application for the National Register listing. He did the entire application by himself," beamed Mrs. Curry.

According to the Department of Parks and Recreation in Sacramento, only a small proportion of the homes and structures nominated for national recognition and prominence are actually accepted and included in the listing. Nomination does not automatically place a house in the register.

After nomination, the State Historical Preservation Resources Commission makes recommendations to the State Director of Parks and Recreation, who in turn, must approve the application. Final approval comes from the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D.C. Besides offering tax relief, preservation for all time as a federal landmark is then assured. In California in 1976, only 92 landmarks were so designated.

"We're giving the dedication party to call attention to the fact that you can get into the National Register with a little effort and save historical homes such as Stonedene for future generations to enjoy. And an added bonus is the fact that not just anything can be built next to it. We are the first owners to make the house available to the public," Mrs. Curry continued "and we feel it is our civic contribution."

Invitations to the dedication have been mailed. From the office of Governor Edmund Brown Jr., Carlotta Mellon will represent the Governor.

The dedication will be conducted by Knox Mellon, Historic Preservation Coordinator of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento.

Senator Alan Cranston, State Controller Ken Corey, State Senator John Dunlap, Assemblyman Vic Fazio, Representative Robert Leggett and County Supervisor Larry Asera are some of the dignitaries aiding in the honor for Stonedene on the guest list, as well as many others who helped secure the nomination and friends and neighbors of the Currys.

Meeting the stringent criteria of the National Register, Stonedene is rich in archeological, historical and architectural significance and is one of the largest and most imposing homes in Solano County and in fact in the Sacramento Valley.

A classic American Gothic Revival period lodging, Stonedene appears to have been plucked out of the nineteenth century and majestically placed stone by stone in the midst of a eucalyptus grove. Built in 1861 by Samuel Martin, added to and remodeled extensively by Julia Morgan (the architect of Hearst Castle in 1929), the three story home, with steeply pitched slate roof, gables and angles, conjures visions of movie sets and romantic gothic novels.

The mansion was built from native stone from a nearby quarry and from cream colored variegated Contra Costa County stone from across the Carquinez Straits. Martin hired a German stonemason to supervise the construction, but the actual labor was supplied by Chinese "coolies."

Even more remarkable is the fact that although the house reflects the sentimental and romantic thinking and architectural style prevalent in the Victorian period, Stonedene is a stone example of the Gothic Revival period. Stonemasonry was often translated into wood in that era and therefore, some of the stone tracery became wooden gingerbread. Not so with

Stonedene, whose name literally means valley of stones.

The grouping of the rooms inside actually determined the exterior aspect of the gables and angles.

The elegant rooms, with stippled plaster and beamed ceilings, bespeak of earlier opulence. Hallway arches, french windows, oak hardwood flooring, alcoves, niches, nooks and crannies give the home a warm, comfortable lived-in feeling, even though it is furnished with lavish period pieces. There are four baths and two half baths, with two of the showers containing seven shower heads. Each floor has a fire hose outlet, containing 50 feet of hose, with fire nozzles.

Two massive red lava rock fireplaces, two kitchens, a cellar with a wine room, rumpus room, utility room, workshop, library and solarium, besides a boiler room to house the radiator heating unit, make Stonedene truly unique.

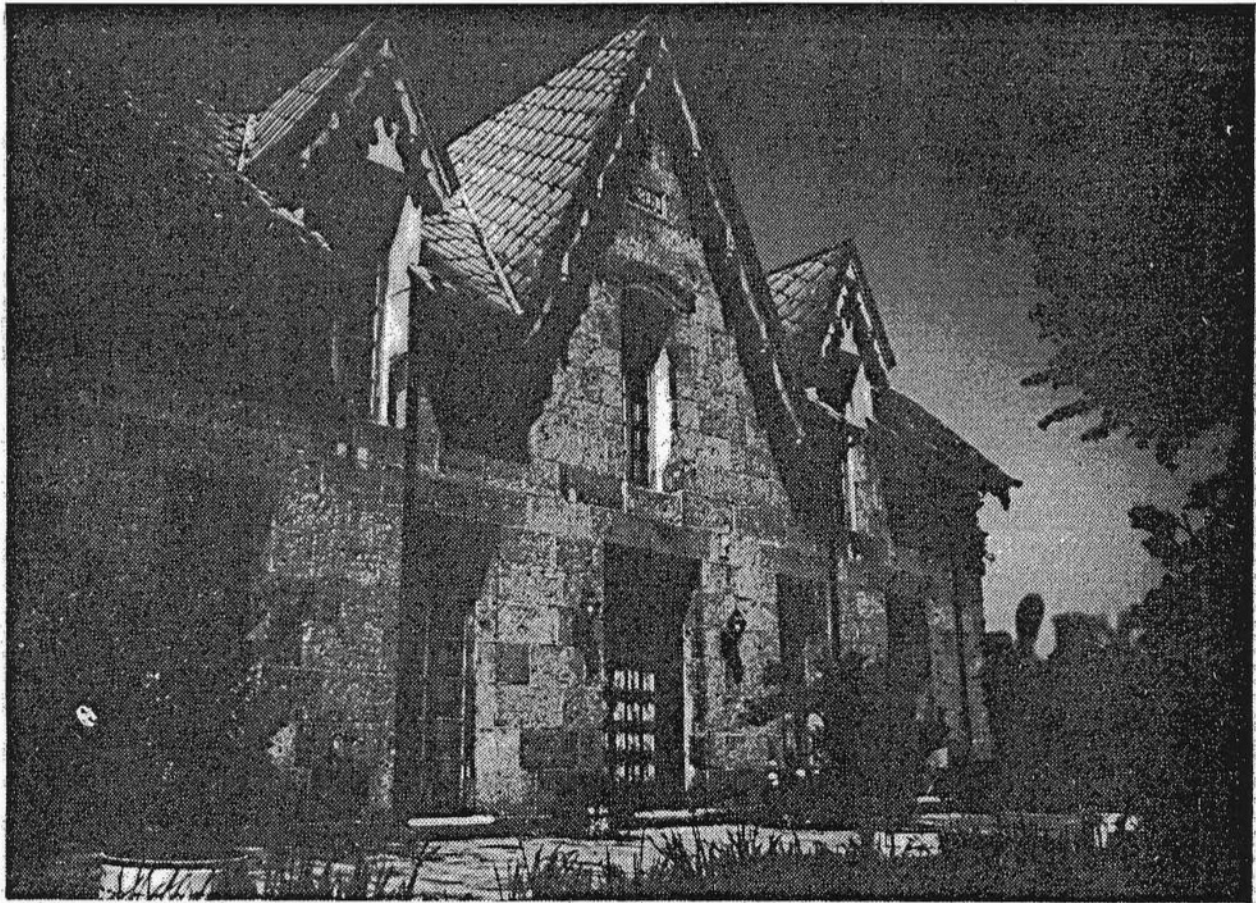
The property consists of the main house, plus a detached four car, two story carriage house, on three and seven tenths acres of heavily wooded giant eucalyptus and ancient oaks. It boasts its own natural sparkling spring.

"Preserving some of the Indian remnants was instrumental in our desire to have Stonedene become a national landmark," commented Mrs. Curry. "It overlooks a portion of an Indian Village of the South Patwin Suisun Indian tribe. A grinding stone, with many indentations, attesting to prolonged use, is a few hundred feet from the back door."

Stonedene received a historical landmark designation in 1971 by the Native Sons of the Golden West.

"And now Stonedene has achieved national landmark status," Mrs. Curry added.

Busy as they are, the Currys are looking forward with happy anticipation to the weeks ahead, that will give Stonedene a permanent place in California's heritage.



STONEDENE, Suisun Valley Mansion built in 1861 by Samuel Martin in American Gothic Revival style of architecture, has been awarded national recognition by being listed in Washington, D.C., in the National Register of Historic Places as a federal landmark. Owners, Dr. and Mrs. Donald Curry are planning dedication

ceremonies Saturday, August 20, at 3 p.m., to which many dignitaries have been invited. Ceremonies will be conducted by Knox Mellon Historic Preservation coordinator of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento. In addition, Mrs. Curry is an antique dealer and will be participating in the San Francisco

International Antique Show and Sale at the Sheraton Palace Hotel, four days beginning at 1 p.m., Thursday, August 25 and closing Sunday, August 28 at 6 p.m. Admission is a \$2 donation to United Voluntary Services at the door.

—DR Photo by Owens